



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
AGENCY**

**REGION 8, MONTANA OFFICE
FEDERAL BUILDING, 10 W. 15th STREET, SUITE 3200
HELENA, MONTANA 59626**

March 21, 2005

Ref: 8MO

Representative Denny Rehberg
Attn: Marti Dalson-Kentzel
105 Smelter Avenue, NE
Suite 116
Great Falls, MT 59404

Dear Ms. Dalson-Kentzel:

This letter is in response to Representative Rehberg's March 1, 2005 letter requesting information addressing Mr. Michael Crill's concerns about Libby asbestos and the cleanup. In addition to several technical issues, Mr. Crill raises questions about management and oversight of the cleanup.

The Libby Asbestos Site is one of EPA's top priority Superfund sites, nationally. This site alone receives approximately 10% of the national Superfund cleanup budget. On the local level, the safety of workers and residents during the cleanup remains the number one priority in Libby and Troy for Region 8's Libby team.

As Governor Schweitzer stated in his February 4, 2005 letter to Mr. Crill, the U.S. EPA has been delegated the authority for decision-making and overseeing cleanup activities in Libby and will remain responsible until the Libby Asbestos site is deleted from the National Priorities List. The Montana Department of Environmental Quality will also work closely with EPA to ensure that the cleanup protects public health and the environment.

EPA continues to work hard to find sources of exposure to Libby asbestos still posing substantial risk to Libby residents and remove them. This task is technically challenging, costly, and time-consuming. I have every confidence that the Project Managers are capable professionals who will continue to make good decisions in the face of difficult choices and a less than ideal budget. By implementing rigorous cleanup and operations and maintenance plans that will be developed over the next year with the benefit of local input, Libby will be a safe place to live, work and raise a family.

The specific technical issues Mr. Crill raises in the several enclosures you sent with your request involve areas that fall within the corridor between the mine site and the town of Libby on both sides of the Kootenai River. This area is the subject of a complaint from



Mr. Crill to the Inspector General. We believe it is appropriate at this point to allow the Inspector General to determine to what extent they need to "investigate" his allegations.

However, please understand that while EPA has not sampled the "entire corridor," we have sampled many areas in it. It is possible that we will find other areas that need cleanup. EPA will continue sampling and take appropriate response actions through the life of the project. At present we rely on the state of the art sampling, analysis, and risk assessment tools we have.

EPA shares Mr. Crill's concern about notifying the public about the dangers of exposure to Libby asbestos. We hold public meetings and distribute fact sheets, news articles and other resources with information about identifying potentially contaminated material, where it might be found, and what to do - or not to do - with it. Abundant public health and environmental information is available at our local Information Center in Libby. A comprehensive web site with information on a variety of topics related to asbestos and many links to non-EPA educational material can be accessed at www.epa.gov/region8/superfund/libby.

Please don't hesitate to contact me at 406-452-5001 for additional information. You may also contact the Project Manager, Jim Christiansen at 303-312-6748 or the Community Involvement Coordinator, Wendy Thomi in my office at 406-457-5037.

Sincerely,

Original signed

John F. Wardell
Director
Montana Office